Circuit Funding Process User Experience Survey

Introduction

This user experience report on the district oversight process[1] for simplified circuit-based NPNP funding submissions follows on from the district NPNP user experience survey at the commencement of the NPNP funding process. This particular report is offered by the Mission Funding Officer, flowing from work in the Connexional year 2023-24 on NPNP funding process descriptions and quality/service-level improvements.

In both user experience surveys – district and circuit-based – feedback was sought from users (districts making NPNP submissions) on a new funding process. The circuit-based (district oversight) process benefited from continuous improvement and collaboration with districts, which was an outcome of the district user experience survey.

Survey process

The survey was sent to the following districts who have had approval during 2023/24, for their district oversight processes in chronological order:

- Yorkshire North East (tranche 1)
- Newcastle upon Tyne (tranche 1)
- Northampton (tranche 1)
- Sheffield (tranche 1)
- South West Peninsula (tranche 2)
- Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury (tranche 2)
- Yorkshire West (tranche 2)

This list shows the early adopters in both tranches implementing a process which begins to deliver circuit-based NPNPs where progress has been much slower than originally forecast. Newcastle upon Tyne district has already approved one circuit-based NPNP which has been ratified by the Project Funding Officer and sent to the Mission Committee on a 'for information' basis.

There were six responses, so not every district has responded; nevertheless it is a good response rate. The collected responses follow, firstly as text answers to the questions and then, for the five main questions, with numbered ratings. The districts' answers are numbered, each district has the same number throughout.

Survey results

Q1. How did you find completing/submitting your district oversight process? (scored below)

1. Quite a lengthy and detailed document, but helped by the sight of previous submissions for reference
2. I found it fairly smooth, advice from Julian, Matt and Eunice as ever helpful and we've had good engagement with it locally with our EMM group and supers meetings
3. We had already been thinking about how we would encourage and support NPNP in circuits across our district, so it was not an overly complex process. It did push us to

[1] starting-new-christian-communities-npnps-section-6_7LvWXbl.pdf

codify our district NPNP Overview Team as a separate and more focussed group than our DLT
4. Relatively easy....once we'd worked out how best to do it.
5. We found it straightforward. Having an example of one that had been previously completed was a big help in understanding the information required.
6. Relatively straight forward. A little to and fro to get it right for submission but I appreciated the support.

These answers highlight that the process is more than form-filling, although there is a subsequent question about conversations, these answers indicate how appreciative district officers are of accompanying and feedback from Connexional Team members. As indicated above, the collaborative approach enabled one district's (excellent) documentation to be shared with another to facilitate their own process development and completion of the form.

Q2. How clear and helpful was the guidance in the Circuit NPNP booklet and on form(s)? (scored below)

1. Very helpful
2. Very
3. We have not used the Circuit NPNP booklets much. Our district oversight process was largely shaped from our own thinking and from the E&G guidance provided for district projects (probably this was partly about timing of when it became available). We have distributed the booklets to superintendents, but in practice direct conversation with individuals and teams in circuits and district involvement in visioning groups is proving more effective in articulating shared Connexional wisdom at the frontline.
4. Very clear...although at times it just needs interpreting into specific contexts
5. The Guidance is clear, although our clarity was for sure helped by having completed the Submission for our District project.
6. Clear, but took a bit of time reading and finding the right bits of information.

The third answer above is very encouraging and indicates commonality of thinking within the NPNP 'movement' (both districts and Connexional staff). Some of the answers indicate what might be called a desire for guidance which is more than clear. The district support and overall funding process continue to seek maximum clarity and to offer as much support as necessary.

Recommendations arising:

- Review and improve this web page Circuit funding process

Q3. How helpful were 'accompanying' conversations with the Evangelism and Growth team? (scored below)

1. Very helpful, a good range of experience and advice from around and within NPNP.
2. Really helpful
3. In our context, these conversations were whilst the interaction between district and central oversight was still being worked out. We are very grateful for Eunice, Matt and Julian's keenness to listen carefully to what felt important locally.
4. Essential and significant
5. We have found contact with the Connexional team to be helpful, constructive and supportive. There is clearly a culture in NPNP team to 'find ways to make it happen'.
6. Helpful.

The whole district support and overall funding process are built on being helpful (collaborative, informative, facilitative) so it is very encouraging to see that reflected strongly in these answers. This comment is especially encouraging - *There is clearly a culture in NPNP team to 'find ways to make it happen'.* This was exactly the purpose of the district oversight process.

Q4. How satisfied were you with any feedback on your district oversight submission and how it was received by the Mission Committee? (scored below)

1. Feedback was constructive and the submission was received positively by the Committee
2. Very
3. Highlighted some specific things we had taken as self-evident (such as focus on church at the margins) but our process was improved from specifically stating them
4. Very happy with that
5. The feedback was constructive and helpful, we used it closely in our final submission. Informal discussions were also important. We received a positive response from the Mission Committee and we took that as a further indicator that our process matches the purpose and objectives of NPNP.
6. I don't think I had any feedback apart than it was accepted. [Note – specific feedback is given if further work is needed on the submission to increase the likelihood of it being approved by the Mission Committee.]

It may be a truism to observe that (constructive) feedback is always appreciated, and this is strongly indicated here. From the beginning, feedback has been built into the supporting and funding process. It has been refreshing to offer feedback that results in stronger submissions which better meet funding criteria with a (usually) short turnaround. Answer 6 equated to a low numbered rating which indicates some lack of clarity in the survey question and feedback expectations.

Recommendations arising:

- Improve clarity around feedback expectations

Q5. How clear is the circuit NPNP funding process following approval of your oversight process?

1. Some areas are not as clear as others, but emails to follow-up questions are always answered.
2. Not got there yet!
3. Feels clear at present. Possibly there is a risk that we will at district level continue tweaking our strategy and oversight process as we learn from circuit NPNPs, and that therefore this will in practice diverge from what Missions Committee have signed off.
4. At times I've not totally understood everything but whenever I ask a question I get a prompt, clear reply.
5. We are happy that our process is clear. It is consistent with what we had learnt previously through our District project submission and, having gone through the oversight process, we feel equipped to help Circuits, who are coming at it for the first time, understand and maximize value from the discernment and submission process.
6. I have simplified it further for our circuits so they know how it works locally and what to expect with district support and accountability.

The answers indicate that there is some lack of clarity experienced at the 'what next?' (ie submitting circuit-based NPNP funding proposals) stage. Clearly, there is more work needed at this point, including rewriting of guidance material and form rubric.

Recommendations arising:

- Review clarity using email questions from districts and make changes.

Q6. [This only applies to one district] How did you find the process of making a circuit funding submission after your oversight process was approved? (scored below)

4. Like above, I think we've had some necessary conversation in order to make it run smoothly. But we got there quite quickly. [Newcastle upon Tyne district]

This answer links to the previous question and also highlights the clarity issue.

Q7. Is there anything that could have improved the process for you and your colleagues?

1. Some visuals would be helpful - perhaps a diagram showing the steps and timeline of a successful application from start to finish (ie completed in 6-8 weeks for example)
2. No
3. Being able to escape the artificial deadlines of the Missions Committee meeting sooner would have reduced stress levels locally, but fully appreciated that rapid roll out of something completely new must be balanced with robust governance over large amounts of money.
4. I think improvements are being made all the time and I certainly appreciate the things that have been adapted after I've given specific feedback previously.
5. We found the process straightforward and well-explained. I'm struggling to see how it could be improved other than minor tweaks. The key thing in being comfortable with the process is getting into the "NPNP mindset" i.e. intentional mission for people not connected with Christianity or church. Once Circuits grasp that overall principle, they will find the process straightforward also.
6. Make the guidance booklet less to read through.

Visuals (ie flowcharts and other illustrative diagrams) have been used to good effect in other parts of the work and the team is committed to making use of these wherever they facilitate the process and add clarity. Answer 3 seems to be suggesting that it would have been helpful to have had the district oversight process in place at the beginning of NPNP (September 2021), while recognising that there has been some evolution and emergence of new thinking. Answer 4 supports how the work has been handled and validates both the subject of this survey and the overall approach. It's interesting to read the comment about making the guidance shorter (it is a more concise version of the district NPNP guidance). Making it more concise would definitely be explored if a further edition (perhaps for God For All 2) was to be produced.

Recommendations arising:

- Introduce visuals
- Highlight oversight process for districts preparing their first NPNP submission (and incorporate into district NPNP submission process?)
- Review booklet and/or web pages

Q8. Do you have any other feedback about the process?

1. I have always found the team helpful and encouraging.
2. No
3. n/a
4. Not at present
5. Thank you to everyone involved. It a really innovative initiative, so very important for mission and witness for Christ in the future. Our Districts' NPNP Team are so excited to be involved.
6. n/a

This question was not answered by districts 3 and 6 so 'n/a' is included to maintain the district numbering. There is little to add here in the responses or comments on them, except to appreciate these words – 'It [is] a really innovative initiative.'

Overall scoring

District	Q1. Completion/ submission process	Q2. Guidance	Q3. Accompanying conversations	Q4. Feedback	Q5. Post-approval
1	4	5	5	4	4
2	4	4	5	5	3
3	4	3	5	5	4
4	5	5	5	4	4
5	5	4	5	5	4
6	5	4	5	1	3
Total	**27**	**25**	**30**	**24**	**22**
Average	4.5	4.2	5.0	4.0	3.7

The table shows a 'perfect score' for the Accompanying conversations, which is the core of the approach to the work, not the forms, or even the funding. The Feedback score is coloured by the clarity issue mentioned above. The Post-approval score indicates, as observed above, the need for some further work.

Conclusions

In brief:

- There is a great deal of appreciation for the collaborative, facilitative and feedback-driven aspects of the process.
- A reputation has been gained, building on the first bullet above, for enabling the process to work as well as possible, driven by learning.
- There is no end to clarity – more is always better and being clarity-driven leads to high satisfaction, and high approval rates.

- Investing in, and describing (with examples), an end-to-end process has much value. The work continues after approval.
- Keep working on the guidance.

Additionally, reflecting on three years of this funding process, and many years of previous Connexional funding processes:

- Collaboration and feedback – these are the strongest aspects of the process and have delivered significant culture change and a reshaping of Connexional team/District interactions.
- Benefits of this funding process – compared to competitive, application-based funding regimes (CGC), NPNP funding has many advantages. It is agile, flexible, collaborative and feedback-driven. It achieves good 'results' and has a strong focus on enabling. The work continues to encourage more take up.

Summary of Recommendations

- Review and improve this web page Circuit funding process. [This page has been updated and contains the revised Circuit Guide.
- Improve clarity around feedback expectations.
- Review clarity using email questions from districts and make changes.
- Introduce visuals in available guidance.
- Highlight oversight process for districts preparing their first NPNP submission (and consider whether to incorporate into district NPNP submission process).
- Review guidance booklet and web pages

All of these recommendations will be [were] implemented by 31 January 2025 at the latest.